



Dreams of Trespass

1. Hudud or the “sacred frontier” is defined by Mernissi’s father as necessary because “Harmony exists when each group respects the prescribed limit of the other; trespassing leads only to sorrow and unhappiness.” Given this dictum, why do some women in the book dream of trespassing this frontier?
2. How does Mernissi define a domestic harem, as opposed to an imperial one? What are the possible political and social dimensions of secluding women in domestic harems?
3. What is the significance of the different stories offered by women in the book to explain the origins of harems?
4. How different are the lifestyles in the harem of Mernissi’s rural family and the one she lives in Fez? Why do these differences exist?
5. At one point in the book, the young Mernissi learns that Jews in Germany have to wear a yellow star to distinguish them from other Germans. What parallel does she draw between the yellow star and her own situation as a woman in Morocco?
6. A heroine from *The Arabian Nights*, Princess Burdur inspires women to “turn the world upside down” when their situation is hopeless. How does this relate to Mernissi’s life and how does it inspire her?
7. How does Mernissi illustrate the importance of women’s solidarity? How does she relate this ideal to tradition?